THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

Three Metrical Translations by Tagore — — —
Poems by Eleven Other Poets — — — — —
From Another Point of View — by Carolyn Hall
The Age of Candor — — — by Frank Hill
Looking Back at Synge — by Maxwell Anderson
Edwin Arlington Robinson's New Book Reviewed
— — — — — By Louise Townsend Nicholl

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Contents

POEMS Page

Rabindranath Tagore's Poetry in Metrical Translation..... 3

Borasan. By Frank Ernest Hill..... 5

After Whistler. By Agnes Kendrick Gray..... 8

Fritz Kreisler. By Carolyn Hall..... 9

To Nijinski. By Eunice Tietjens..... 10

To "A Shropshire Lad." By Helen Hoyt..... 10

Looking East at Sunrise. By Amy Murray..... 11

Navaho Poems. By Eda Lou Walton..... 12

Decision. By Louise Townsend Nicholl..... 13

A Girl. By Edward Sapir..... 14

Dedication. By Genevieve Taggard..... 14

O Lente, Lente, Currite Noctis Equi. By John Morris..... 16

EDITORIAL

From Another Point of View. By Carolyn Hall..... 17

The Age of Candor. By Frank Ernest Hill..... 18

Looking Back at Synge. By Maxwell Anderson..... 20

IN REVIEW

Robinson's New Book. By Louise Townsend Nicholl..... 21

The Measure

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Number 4 June, 1921

Rabindranath Tagore's Poetry in Metrical Translation

Specimens reproducing the metres of the originals.*

I

BREEZY April, vagrant April,
Rock me in your swing of music!
Thrill my branches with enchantment
Of your touch of sweet surprises;
In my idle dream by wayside
You come startling me from slumber,
Wilful in your mood fantastic
Tease me with inconstant courting.

Breezy April, vagrant April,
I live with my lonesome shadows,
I know all your fitful fancies,
Language of your flitting footsteps;
All my secrets burst in blossoms
At your passing breath of whisper,
And my new leaves break in tumult
Of abandonment of kisses!

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Second class entry applied for at the New York postoffice.

II

O MY lover, come in reckless splendor,
Hurt the air with shock of your arrival;
No more secret meetings in uncertain
Gleams of twilight, let your burning torches
Fling through midnight their tumultuous laughter.
Grasp me by my right hand, let all sleepers
Wake and come and see me glad and helpless
Held in might of your majestic silence.

III

WHEN the evening steals on Western waters,
Thrills the air with wings of homeless shadows;
When the sky is crowned with star-gemmed silence,
And the dreams dance on the deeps of slumber;
When the lilies lose their faith in morning,
And, in panic close their hopeless petals,
There's a bird which leaves its nest in secret,
Seeks its song in trackless paths of heaven!

*At the request of the present editor of *The Measure,* Mr. Tagore was good enough to make metrical versions of stanzas of certain of his poems. The results, one is justified in saying, are an addition to the stock of poetic metres in English.

Borasan

IN the desert near Khotan
Lie the bones of Borasan.
Once its roofs were red and blue
Where the pear and poplar grew;
Once where river barges rode
Rainbow stuffs of barter glowed,—
Peacock plumes and scarlet wool,
Silver fish from Kara-Kul,
Apricots and carven jades,
Mills for prayer, beaten blades.
Mounded now are sands above
Buried barter, buried love,
Only winds that burrow deep
Tumble sunward from their sleep
Rings engreened upon the bone,
Buddhas smiling in blue stone,
Coins, combs, toys, the dust of vases,
Walls the restless sand effaces.

Men with sword and torch and shout
Did not blot that city out.
Men were sand to pass and pass,
Gleam and shadow, through her glass.

Buddha begging with a bowl
Spread the white peace of his soul.

Eyes beneath a shading hand,
Gazing eastward over sand,
Alexander, desert-burned,
Dreamed, and looked his fill, and turned.

Westward riding Ghengis Khan
Stopped to ask of Borasan
Seven asses heaped with pearls,
Meat and millet, fifty girls.
These he got, and did not stay. . . .

Marco Polo went this way . . .

Over tundras, God-enticed,
Friars crept to preach their Christ. . . .

Still the camels through the gates
Coughed beneath their swaying freights;
Brown-legged boatmen from the stream
Made the palace parrots scream,
Till the peach and melon land
Shrank between the seas of sand,
Till the sand was drifted, drifted,
Slowly through the poplars sifted,
Reached at last the river's edge,
Slowly builded bar and ledge,
Till the crystal ribbon dried
To a crystal thread, and died,
And the green of melon plots
And the gold of apricots
Sank like sunlight into sand—
Till the wind upheaved the land,
And the earth, that mothered man,
Whelmed him there in Borasan.

Northward still the river runs
Unsubdued by sand or suns,
Northward still the poplars press
On its living loveliness.
Here the reeds are tall in spring,
Wild geese mate and finches sing,
Here the shepherds drive their sheep,—
Build themselves for shade and sleep
Huts of woven reeds, and make

Out of maize a simple cake.
How to bake and herd and shear,—
That is all of knowledge here.
Once perhaps their fathers knew
Pointed roofs of red and blue,
Once with millstones crushed their maize,
Baked them tiles to pave their ways,
Ate from silver, drank from glass—
All is lost in sand, alas!

Is it so? Did thousands die
When the *buran* lifted high
Desert dunes to storm their doors,
Slaying through the streets and floors?
Crept a few at length to light
Through those days the sand made night,
Wild with wind, and beasts that ran
Screaming out of Borasan?
Did they crawl they knew not where,
Wear away from what they were,
Rudely learn to live again,
Rived from trade and art and men?
All they gathered, all they knew,
Did it die as raindrops do,
Leaving only maize and sheep,
Toil and huts of reed and sleep?
Back again where life began
Grope thy people, Borasan?

Frank Ernest Hill

After Whistler

THIS mezzo-tint of mist and smoke blue air,
These gray blue waters, gray black cherry trees
Are Whistler's manner to the brushtip . . . these
And shore-lamps lit against the nearing night,
That lie in little broken lanes of light.

He would have washed these wistful colors in
With brooding hand and spirit edged and keen—
His vision and the subtle hour akin—
Seeing beyond the symbol the unseen,
The overtones of tint, the underglow
Which lends that nameless gleam of lustre-ware
To the slow-rippled river there.

Blue-silver lights! He would have loved them so!
And that black bridge, long-spanned and low,
With the frail mist fringing the farther end.
What art he had for bridges—skill to blend
Their arches into his backgrounds of blue air. . . .

Swiftly he would have caught this nocturne mood,
This mood of mist and sky,
And held it in few strokes and fewer tones,
Set there
Below the blurred-in trees his *Butterfly*
And called it "Silver and Blue" . . .
Bridge-Builder of dreams, I dedicate
This river dusk to you.

Agnes Kendrick Gray

Fritz Kreisler

THE shining, red wood thing
Of slender curvings,
Deeply polished grain,
And strings for sound,
Rests lightly underneath your chin.
There is no cuddling
Of violin,
No strain
To gestures preconceived
And bound,
When you begin
To play.
Your first bow stills . . .
A seldom found perfection fills
The circle of your moving hands,
Deft in their utterance, while your wrist
Turns smoothly as a flying bird,
And with the grace a dancer understands
Transforming every twist
Of bow. There is no word
To tell of what you bring. . . .

What we have heard
Sings on in silence till the end of art.
But I have this for my remembering—
The night I felt you playing on my heart.

Carolyn Hall.

To Nijinski

(Stricken with creeping paralysis)

MAKER of beauty, fire-bringer,
Bringer of flame for the spirit
And the white fire of loveliness—
You are gone now.
The flame is lapped up,
The loveliness grown dark,
And your fleet thighs
Frozen . . .

Yet suffer us that we remember—
Maker of beauty, fire-bringer.

Eunice Tietjens.

To "A Shropshire Lad"

OFTEN I remember your book, poet, and your sad heart
Heavy because of death; singing behind all joys the sadness
Of their so brief possession; how strength and gladness
Fade with us into oblivion, how all things fade forever:
Friendship and love and pride, wisdom, endeavor.

Cruel knowledge you sing, poet; that we are living in room
Made vacant for us by the dead, and their same doom,
How certainly us too,—how soon, it will compel away;
Where even the full-unfolded brain turns back to clay.

Helen Hoyt

Looking East at Sunrise

IN the half-light of the early morning, who's this still abroad?
Plainly, one who should be well upon his road by now . . .
Best give him warning. . . .

Hurry you, hurry!—you who have not heeded cockcrow. You who dally overboldly where the twilight leaves unwillingly, who linger in the valley where the frosty grass greets daybreak coldly,—why so loth to pass?

Don't be cheated, you who shun the sunlight, by the wan light on the cheek of High Tor; for his back is to the East, and his face is to the moon that's going down now in the West. . . .

Day is toward. See! the brook pours glassy-yellow, and the sun is reddening the top twigs of the wood. Look on him and you are done. . . .

You who haunt the world that's gray-lit, don't you know that we poor souls who wear our bodies still, do ever what we may to keep the two together? In the world that's daylit, there is no place for the bodiless. . . .

Then back into the Underworld, back into the Otherworld, while still the gates of Heaven and Hell stand ajar: get you gone, get you gone. . . .

Belated ghost, Ill Spirit, pixy, nixie, elf, leprechaun—whatso you are,

Day's upon you—save yourself!

Amy Murray

Navaho Poems

War Dance

THE earth is my home.
It is powerful.
Water speaks in foam.
It is powerful.
There sits a hill.
It is powerful.
I go now to kill.
I am powerful!

Hunting Dance

BLACK tail deer is running about
Near by.
Teal duck light in the grasses
High.
Turkeys rush where the tumble weeds
Lie.
Good hunting, good hunting, good hunting
He Hi!

Deer Dance

I AM a deer,
Light-footedly I stamp.
Listen! I hear
Hunters from the camp.
Quick through the brush
Without a sound I go.
Hush!
They have found
My tracks in snow.

Eda Lou Walton

Decision

SNOW fresh and soft on the wood-road,
Snow ragged and thick at the edge of the frozen pond,
Snow and a fresh, soft stillness here
And in the evergreens beyond.

A whirring, tearing, softly ruthless sound
Rising from the ground. . . .
So are decisions sometimes made.
A dark thing flying. . . .
Level, straight, and low,
Wings steady and neck out. . . .
A wild duck through the wood.

And when he had gone we came
To the very place the duck had stood,
Deciding.
Here was a curving, duck-print chain,
A lovely pattern in the snow
Made by the way a duck's feet go,
Closely linked and deeply set,
One web-print by the other met,
Each foot decorously bent
As if the duck had had intent
To show in snow the perfect chain
So often marred in dust and rain.
Straight to the edge the pattern led—
Just here the wild duck quiet stood—
(There was no blur of shuffling in the snow
Where he stood considering how to go)
When he came to the edge of his frozen pond—
And flew instead. . . .

A dark thing through the wood.

Louise Townsend Nicholl

A Girl

HER veins are clear in marble shallowness,
Within her unvoluptuous flesh these blue
Lines pattern, evanesce; her hands are dew
Whose warmth is in the form, and they express
A resting essence cool and fireless.
Oh, but she stands with softness like a new
Fallen snow! but from the coldness glimmers through
Two wonderful eyes that are too wise to guess
But that must know or have no need to know.
She is a maiden, I would think, of snow;
Perhaps she is a stillness all aglow—
For when a footstep down the hall was heard,
I thought I saw her lips fall on a word
Of silence fluttering like a frightened bird.

Edward Sapir.

Dedication

THESE were his songs, now he has broken them.
All he has made, that has he also slain;
Seeing my beauty budding, broke the stem,
Finding his likeness here, where he has lain,
Finding the flame of his hurt spirit here
In this small pool that motioned with his shade,
Seeing himself, he smote me with his fear—
He only lives to break what he has made.

All, all he fathered, all that lived by him
Shut from his face with banging of loud doors.
The sun, losing his spirit, now is gone dim,
Only the sea that roared before, still roars.

Now it is time to go, softly away,
We will grow fragile, songs; soon we will fade,
He has no place for us, we cannot stay—
He cannot bear the beauty he has made.

Where will we go, my songs, under the sun?
There is no place to go, no, there is none.
The sea is scornful of our sufferings,
The sea is like him careless of all things,
Beating her own, and mourning that they die.

All things are like him, beautiful they lie
Pressing their image wildly on our grief
Prone in their beauty, terrible and brief—
And when they face us bitterly afraid
They cannot bear the beauty they have made.

Where will we go, my songs? He does not know
Your faces any more, or love your lips.
We are too frail to last, there will be snow
The noise of rivers, and the winter's whips.
To wind and water we will give our woe
That once made music. Let them follow him.
When all the sky is darkened at the rim
And he and we have stumbled in its shade
No one will know the beauty he has made.

Genevieve Taggard

O Lente, Lente, Currite Noctis Equi

"RUN slow, run slow, O horses of the night,
Stay your wild gallop through the plains of space,
Wake not so soon the rheumy red-eyed Light!"
So Ovid, turning from Corinna's face,
Cried to the frantic horses of the night.

"Run slow, run slow, O horses of the night!"
So Faustus prayed, and all damned men as well
Who wait the messenger Death in the first light
On the pale horse whose stable is in hell—
O cruel haste of the horses of the night!

"Run slow, run slow, O horses of the night!"
So do they cry who dream of love forgone,
Brushed by dead faces, warm again and bright,
Soon to be scattered by the hooves of dawn.
They do not pause, the horses of the night.

John Morris

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ACTING EDITOR FOR JUNE, JULY, AND AUGUST—PADRAIC COLUM
ASSISTANT FOR THE SAME TERM—CAROLYN HALL

From Another Point of View

TAKING the broader view, editing poetry is not discouraging, even to an associate editor. It is perfectly true that in the pile of manuscripts one goes through in a week much is too bad even to be criticized, and the ecstasy of pulling out a good poem is one of the rare ecstasies. But the sense of the contact of these many contributors with the idea of writing poetry is something to get hold of. Rambling things, amounting no more than to a relieving self-analysis of some repressed individual, still represent someone's idea of writing a poem. And that much is good.

For while poets are born, circumstances develop them, and it is far better, I believe, to let circumstances develop a crowd of poetic aspirers than neglect developing one real poet. Italy has produced much opera and a long, celebrated line of singers, even to Caruso; Italians carry songs on their lips and spend music as we spend pennies.

Whether the national mood is resultant or causative does not matter. There is a discoverable ratio between the mood and the country's artistic accomplishment which can be applied elsewhere. The fact that more persons in America are writing verse today than twenty years ago, I think is a promising sign. Not everyone will agree with me, not even every editor of *The Measure,* but amicable editorial disagreement has been set forth as one of the sinews of the magazine.

Since the days of the meistersinger and minnesinger, and the other itinerant bards, there has never been so widespread an assimilation of song.

Books are middlemen and with dependence upon them for circulation, the contact between people and poetry is more uncertain because less direct. The best way, therefore, to get people and poetry together now is to bring about extensive writing of it.

And this will in time have an effect upon the attitude of scoffing at poets which is characteristic of an astounding number of intelligent persons in this country. I have even known individuals, real enough to appreciate Conrad, and extravagant over Keats, who are embarrassed at the idea of their contemporaries being poets. Living poets are long-haired if masculine; bob-haired, if not; given to lying in bed late in the mornings; very untidy, and terrible poseurs. The business of making poetry is a field for slapstick humor and genteel poking in the ribs. These people refuse to see that poets--going no farther afield than the editorial board of *The Measure* for examples—are simply people who work all day at bread and butter jobs unless they are fortunate enough not to have to, and snatch a moment here and moment there for writing their poems; that blossoming into being poets has not changed them at all except for making them very happy in a natural artistic expression.

Contrasted against these, every poem on an associate editor's desk is a blessing.

Carolyn Hall

The Age of Candor

IF anything especially characterizes the large body of the poetry being written to-day it is an effort toward frankness. Never was the poet so interested in taking a complete inventory of his world and particularly of himself. In fact the complete inventory has come into poetic standing certainly for the first time in the last three hundred years, possibly for the first time since making poetry began. If the early 18th century was the age of reason and the early 19th century was the age of romanticism, the early twentieth century is the age of candor. *Spoon River,* laying bare the hidden heart of a nasty little town such as all of us have inhabited, is of this age. Carl Sandburg's *Chicago Poems,* using material that poets had not dared previously to use, belongs to it. Mr. Untermyer's intimate pictures of modern love are its children. Miss Ridge's vivid descriptions beat with the urge to reveal unrevealed corners. Thousands of manuscripts floating about the country, dozens of poems appearing monthly in the magazines, reflect the eager desire to disclose.

It is a natural desire, in fact, an inevitable one. Has not this last hundred years been a century of great discovery,—discovery not only of new machines and new ways of running them, but of new facts about the great preoccupations of the poet, body and mind? Was not the poet given the scientific spirit to play with as he chose, and could he help absorbing it? Could he fail to see that all past poetry had omitted much, and was it not natural for him to begin remedying past omissions? The scientific spirit teaches completeness.

The age of candor has been a good age in many ways. It has brought poetry new subjects, new forms (the desire to be one's self completely is the professed mainspring for varied experiment in rime and vers libre), and new words. Nothing in poetic matter, poetic patterns, or poetic phraseology is now categorically forbidden. The result has certainly been new poetry, and the old poetry had come to a pass where anything different was hopeful. There was no advantage in continuing the late Victorian matter or manner, and we can thank the new songs for their mere novelty. We can also thank them for a great many fine things in this novelty.

And yet the age of candor is at times discouraging. It has marshalled many beautiful specimens, but the eye grows tired at times watching them pass under the microscope. Lola Ridge has written two volumes of vivid descriptive verse. Some of it is charming, but one wonders of the whole what it is going to mean now that it is done and assembled. And what is to be done with some of the categories Miss Lowell has made? Will many of the easy excursions Carl Sandburg makes have any abiding value? Michael Strange has published a volume called *Resurrecting Life,* and in the second of its three sections, called "Emotion," one is assailed with incredible intimacies. The *Song of Solomon* treats passionate love beautifully and frankly, but it is reticence in comparison with the turgid and rhetorical lyrics of Michael Strange. In these passion is brought into the laboratory, and although one finds nothing repulsive in the idea of a poetry of passionate love, one turns from this assembly of its detailed exhibits.

The age of candor has the same fault as the age of romanticism. It has made a god of a philosophy and forgotten that poetry is primarily an art. Romanticism ran to seed in a fervid sentimentality. Today we cannot enjoy its more ardent periods even in Byron or Wordsworth. There was nothing the matter with romanticism itself. Shakespeare could make it immortal. The trouble was that romanticism was a phase of life which could become imperishable poetry only through art, and the poets used art

sparingly. The same thing is true of candor. Our frank poets have written as though they thought that the telling of the full truth—any truth —was the important thing. Actually what is imporant is the choice of that about which the full truth is to be told, and the telling of the truth in memorable words. It is because they have failed to remember this that many twentieth century poets have made an age of candor which will seem weirdly extravagant in the year 2000.

Frank Ernest Hill.

Looking Back at Synge

THE New York Repertory Theatre presents *The Playboy of the Western World* not indeed so well as it could be played, but in a fashion deserving much better houses than it has drawn. I went down to the Bramhall Playhouse not long since to discover whether or not Synge was as great a dramatist on the stage as I had found him in the silence of a library. He is great enough, the performance proved, to get poetry across the footlights. Even if the acting had been bad, which it was not, Synge would have found his way to the audience.

It's a long time—one may count the years of the war as half a century at least—since the *Playboy* was mobbed in New York and its author's phrases first dazzled the young men in the colleges of the middle west. The "little shiny new moon" and the naked ash tree in the month of May and "the high skies are over Ireland" have taken a sober place in literature. Synge also takes his place as a perfect though limited artist, the writer of the most briliant and moving plays the English stage has seen since Shakespeare.

The English stage? Synge may be a proud possession in the minds of English historians sooner or later, but he wrote for the Abbey Theatre, in Dublin, and his poetry and his power are directly traceable to the proud and naive race from which he drew his inspiration. The men and women who set out to create a modern Irish literature have the satisfaction, at least, of having numbered among them an authentic genius; nor was it by accident that *Deirdre* and *The Well of the Saints* were not written in London. London authors, like the novelists and playwrights of New York, have their ear to the asphalt and would be shocked by the indecent aspect of plowed ground. Synge and Lady Gregory and their companions dared to bring the back country into literature; if there were Americans

who wanted to do good work more than they wanted money in pocket and a long run to full houses good plays might yet come out of the United States by a similar process. But not good poetry, I fear, or not home-spun poetry. The best back country home-spun we have is the pure ditch water of *Spoon River*. Because our farmers have no illusions to put into verse those who write about them must make much of their crimes, passions, and unhappiness. Perhaps it was the public school that did this to us. It's the ignorant corners of Ireland where the imagination is still free.

Maxwell Anderson

Robinson's New Book

Avon's Harvest, by Edwin Arlington Robinson. The Macmillan Company, New York.

THIS narrative poem, as psychologically powerful, dramatically sound, and organically beautiful a piece of blank verse as Robinson has done, is the story of what fear can do to a man. But it is not primarily the hatred, the remorse, or the fear, called by Avon his "three diseases," which destroy his peace or his life. It is, rather, his constant uncertainty and conflict as to whether he alone was the cause of his trouble and its ever-increasing results. "Though I'm at odds
With conscience, even tonight, for good assurance
That it was I, or chance and I together,
Did all that sowing."
Even the relief of having told his story was not enough, since there was in him no sharpness of understanding by which he could sever the past from the present.

He tells his story to his best friend on the night before his birthday and a few hours before his death; his friend records it. When Avon was sixteen, there came to his school a snaky youth whom he hated, but who chose Avon as his only friend and who, says Avon, in a passage typical of the book's best writing, "found a few flaws in my tight mail of hate
And slowly pricked a poison into me
In which at first I failed at recognizing
An unfamiliar subtle sort of pity."

Fear was not the cause of his hatred, he says, as it sometimes is; it was, rather, the result. Whether hatred ever originates without fear of

some unconscious kind is a question; and in this case fear was probably in some strange way tied up with that "pity, or something like it," which "was in the poison of his proximity"—that inexplicable something at his trouble's root which only a trained analyst could have uncovered.

One day Avon knocked him down and when he got up there was "the vengeance in his eyes, and a weird gleam of desolation" which was to be there every time Avon saw him or thought he saw him, in the future. When the boy left the school the next day he asked Avon if he had anything to say, adding, "If you are silent, I shall know where you are until you die." And he evidently kept his word. The narrator calls himself "a man who cannot swim, watching a friend drown." Avon needed a man who *could* swim, and dive, and bring up loot from the terrible depths of the mind.

Robinson's way of writing would seem to be getting stronger through simplification, or perhaps it is simply that one never knows how deep a brook is until it clears. His is an austere economy which yet never lacks in graciousness. He has a cold but never unkind vividness which brings one up sharp, as here:

"When the *Titanic* touched a piece of ice
And we were for a moment where we are,
With nature laughing at us."

Yet, although nature laughs at us, nature for him has no importance as against men. He is the psychological poet always. A man's moods never fit in with nature's; nature's fit in rather with the man's, which is the reverse of the usual order. He never gives a feeling by describing the surroundings, but rather conjures up the surroundings by giving the feeling only.

So seldom does he mention concrete things, or single out intricacies of beauty other than those of the mind, that when he does, the eye and the mind blink for a moment, getting the focus, and then rest gratefully on the more holdable, more obviously lovely, more explicit thing. Such a passage is the following, curiously coincidental in its content with what it exemplifies in style:

"My glance at him was brief, turning itself
To the familiar pattern of his rug,
Wherein I may have sought a consolation—
As one may gaze in sorrow on a shell,
Or a small apple."

Louise Townsend Nicholl